

Frequently Asked Questions – UIC Program

What is the announcement by the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR)?

The Division announced steps to review the state's Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program. This is being done in order to ensure that the program fully complies with the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, designed to prevent waste water associated with oil production from being injected into aquifers containing water suitable for human or agricultural use.

What does this entail?

DOGGR is conducting the review in conjunction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA.) The review examines both specific, previously approved UIC wells and projects and UIC program provisions. The review is to ensure that the approvals meet UIC standards, designed to prevent waste water associated with oil production from being injected into aquifers containing water potentially suitable for human or agricultural use.

What steps are being taken?

1. Review of already-approved injection wells
2. Review and improvement of current approval practices
3. Review and improvement of UIC program rules

How long will this take?

Review of already approved and/or existing injection wells could take approximately 3 months. Review and improvement of current approval practices is already underway. Review and improvement of UIC program rules could take approximately 12-18 months.

Why is this being done?

The announcement comes after DOGGR issued orders last month to 7 oil production companies to immediately shut down 11 (of over 1,500 in California) injection wells to avoid potential harm to a limited number of groundwater aquifers in Kern County. The orders were issued after DOGGR discovered that the wells appeared to be injecting into protected sources of groundwater (Since the initial orders were issued, two of the 11 wells have been authorized to resume operations following Division review.)

DOGGR and U.S. EPA

DOGGR has primary authority, granted by the US EPA under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, to regulate underground injection wells related to oil and gas operations in California.. In conjunction with DOGGR, US EPA simultaneously is reviewing the California UIC program. The results of the DOGGR and US EPA review will guide future changes in the state's UIC program.

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